14:Stewart E-5 (1936-1938)1944 NR13 Northern Paiute NR13
Washo NT20

peyotism because it takes the Indians away from the mission," thereby angering the missionary, who retaliates by giving no Christmas presents to any Indians.

Those who consider peyote a religion also believe it an ethical force. Dewey Charles (P,8) is certain that President Roosevelt has peyote in his room "because no one can face it and lie." Streeter Dick (P,5) confesses having been so bad that his wife left him, and says she returned when he accepted peyote and reformed. "Straight living," "charity," and "brotherliness" are the ethical ideals of the cult. Whether the members actually become better is questionable; they appear more charitable within the group but more cantankerous with outsiders.

At least seven affirm they affiliated expressly to stop drinking.[a] Don James (W,2) and Seymour Arnot (W,13), for example, antagonistic even after members of their families joined, reconsidered after a narrow escape from freezing to death while drunk. Emory Dick (P,8) accepted after his wife had left him because of his drunkenness. White and Indian opponents admit peyotism keeps its members from drinking, but they falsely accuse it of attracting only confirmed alcoholics. Although most peyotists, like the majority of Indians, drank prior to their conversions, the Smokeys, Kenos, Dyers, and others never were topers. The devotees' claim that peyote makes drinking whiskey impossible is equally unfounded, for several former members returned to drink, two admitting inebriation between meetings.[b] Peyotists do not drink, considering alcohol a poison the fumes of which may kill a sick person; also, they believe years of peyote-induced vomiting may be required to purify whiskey from the "system." Dr. Bambauer reported that some even refuse to use rubbing alcohol because of fear of contamination. A number of hallucinations convincingly portrayed the evils of whiskey.

Several reject peyote because they like whiskey; others refer to it as "just a cheap drunk"; another argument is that certain Indians have returned to whiskey after using peyote, which is supposed to destroy the taste for alcohol. Apparently, peyotism is shunned both because it stops drinking and because it does not. Another common objection is that peyote is a habit-forming drug, worse than whiskey.[c] Opponents allege that the .nfirm feel better for a day or two, but "get bad again when the dope works off." They argue, "If they don't get the habit for peyote, why do they follow Ben around and go to meetings when they aren't sick?" One inferred that Ben holds the people until noon following an all-night meeting because he is afraid they will do something wrong while doped. Two reformed narcotic addicts declared that peyote was like other drugs, and would not touch it. A third asserted, "Its action is different and doesn't give you the habit."[d]

There is also the idea among opponents that peyote meetings are sexual orgies or at least lead to such debauchery. Rumor, unconfirmed even by embittered former members, aroused suspicion among government officials that possibly aphrodisiacs were being used with peyote. For a year and a half, Ben was carefully watched and[e]

[a] None of the 64 Baptist Mission members in "good standing" and only one of the 31 "active members" of the Fallon Reservation Mission in 1936 became peyotists. (Mission records examined.)

[b] La Barre did not state that Plains Indians became peyotists in order to stop drinking, but he did generalize that "it is . . . considered hygienically, if not ethically, unwise to use peyote in connection with alcoholic drinks; indeed many insist that the former cures addiction to the latter." But La Barre also reports (pp. 101–103) that a Sauk informant quit the cult because peyote "gives you the same effect as whiskey."

[c] La Barre, 147, mentions instances in Oklahoma of a few peyotists getting drunk in spite of their belief they should not.

[d] La Barre, 148–150, reviews the evidence relative to the "possible ill effects or habit-forming nature of the drug," and concludes there is no great danger in its use. The fact that peyotists use it only periodically, once a week or once a month, plus the fact that many cease using it after taking it for years, proves that no physiological appetite is created.

14:Stewart E-5 (1936-1938)1944 NR13 Northern Paiute NR13
Washo NT20

his car was fruitlessly searched three times by the California border patrol. At least a dozen persons claim definite knowledge that Ben added marihuana to the cigarettes he gave in meetings. Lane Dixon (P,1), a graduate of the Nevada Reform School, who has served several short jail sentences and locally is known to be a congenital liar, was informer for the Federal officers. He assured me, also, that marihuana was used because he had smoked marihuana cigarettes and felt the same sensations others described experiencing from eating peyote.[a] The basis for this accusation is Ben's practice of mixing a "white powder" in prayer cigarettes and burning those cigarettes after meeting ("to destroy the evidence"). Ben put some in my prayer cigarette and afterward gave me a sample from his large supply. It was a type of sage leaf chopped fine.

Federal authorities also suspect that Spanish fly (cantharides) has at times been given to girls in peyote meetings. Since I could obtain no real evidence of any display of sexual excitement during or following meetings, and since Lane Dixon is the principal source for the story, I doubt the charge.

The desire for prestige, or the fear of losing it, motivates Washo and Paiute reactions toward peyotism. Members seemed to enjoy vicariously some of the honor and position of their leader. Ben talked with Commissioner Collier (November, 1937), he spoke before the Minden Rotary Club (October, 1937), he prepared an attractive peyote exhibit for the Carson Valley Day Fair.[b] On the other hand, Hank Pete, self-styled chief of the Washo, naturally protests against submission to the rules of the peyote ceremony and to the authority of Ben Lancaster, feeling it detracts from his own prestige. Another nonmember argues, "The President of the United States and the white people in this valley don't use peyote." Shamans probably fear the loss of both money and honor, and, therefore, in the main oppose peyote, notable exceptions being Joe Green, Tom Mitchell, and Sam Dick.

Arguments for and against peyotism have been based on economic grounds. Ben's insistence that contributions are free-will offerings seems to have attracted a few who consider a peyote meeting cheaper than, yet equal to, a shamanistic treatment for which a price, from $2.50 to $5.00 a night, is fixed and paid in advance. The willingness of peyotists to donate liberally probably results from their having been conditioned to paying their shamans well, a practice which still continues, especially among the Washo. Having given up liquor, several reiterate that in spite of traveling expenses and contributions they have more money than formerly for food, clothing, shelter. Don James epigrammatized: "A dime now goes as far as a dollar used to." Several peyotists have recently purchased automobiles. A few may imagine economic gain by picturing themselves replacing Ben Lancaster. However, in his meetings, Sam Dick, the most likely successor, hardly collects expenses. Perhaps some of the Indians wish to associate with the influential Jameses and Arnots, who might provide them with jobs.

Economic objections to peyote, such as that Ben gets too much money, that the Indians should use their money for better purposes, and so on, are mainly rationalizations because the Washo-Paiute are typically unconcerned about their fellow man's economic condition, even when, as often happens, their poorer kinfolk move in

[a] From Bromberg's (1939, 4-12) review of the reactions caused by marihuana, which are increased motor activity, mental confusion, talkativeness, increased desire for alcohol, and sexual excitement, it is clear that marihuana and peyote produce opposite effects. Also, see Lundquist, 1939, 2, for the Sehurz missionary report of the use of marihuana with peyote by Nevada Indians at a "National Fellowship of Indian Workers." Rev. G. E. E. Lundquist, who visited Sehurz in 1938, heard Lane Dixon confirm the story.

[b] Sam Dick spoke and had peyotists sing at the Fair in 1939 (personal communication from Miss Grace Dangberg of Minden).